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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 003197

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [OREP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [US](#)

SUBJECT: HIGHLIGHTS OF APRIL 27-29 CODEL WEXLER

REF: STATE 102777

(U) Classified by Ambassador W.R. Pearson; reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: During an April 27-29 visit to Ankara, Representative Robert Wexler visited with senior GOT leadership to assure continued support for the U.S.-Turkish relationship while simultaneously acknowledging there had been recent differences between the two countries. To mitigate any possible residual disappointment that could occur as a result of the Turkish parliament's decision not to support coalition efforts in Iraq, the Congressman urged the GOT leadership to demonstrate both substantive and symbolic gestures to the U.S. Congress to reaffirm this relationship. End summary.

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Representative Robert Wexler,s Message  
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2. (C) Congressman Robert Wexler began his meetings with the GOT leadership by delivering a good news/bad news message. First the good news: the first full House of Representatives debate on Turkish-American relations in memory (over the \$1 billion supplemental grant) had come out three to one in Turkey's favor despite its taking place at the height of bilateral tensions. Then the bad: there was great disappointment with Turkey within the U.S. administration, and many questioned Turkey's overall policy direction. Throughout his meetings Wexler affirmed "Nothing is more important right now than continued good relations between Turkey and the U.S. He stressed that Turkey must be pro-active in reinvigorating the relationship.

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Prime Minister Tayyip Recip Erdogan  
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3. (C) Prime Minister Erdogan emphasized the importance of Turkey's "strategic partnership" with the U.S. In a long defense, Erdogan (1) expressed regret that the U.S. Congress had reacted so emotionally; (2) claimed that, after the U.K., Turkey gave the U.S. more support than anyone else on Iraq, including allowing Operation Northern Watch to continue for years and permitting U.S. special operations forces to enter Iraq through Turkey; (3) recalled that the GOT had warned the USG that it would be hard to pass the troop deployment resolution; and (4) averred that AK M.P.s were negatively affected by "insulting" anti-Turkish cartoons in the U.S. press. In the end, Turkey's opening of its airspace -- which the GOT allowed because it was a requirement of its alliance with the U.S. -- was more significant than similar moves by Germany or Romania. Now Turkey wanted to establish a common approach with the U.S. to help Iraq become a democracy. Moreover, AK party's parliamentary members had a positive attitude toward the U.S.

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14. (C) Under questioning from Wexler, DCHOD Buyukanit admitted that mil-mil relations were not as solid as previously. He argued weakly that the military had worked for parliamentary passage of the bill to support U.S. combat operations, claiming the military could not impose its will on Parliament.

15. (C) Buyukanit claimed that misunderstandings between Turkey and the U.S. had arisen from "wrong assessments" the U.S. military had sent to Washington, but the Turkish military would now do its best to create a new atmosphere for the future.

16. (C) Buyukanit then listed Turkish concerns related to Iraq: (1) The Kurds could not be trusted; (2) The Iraqi Shi'a were a second-class majority who now wanted a major role; (3) Turkey did not have designs on Kirkuk or Mosul.

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Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul  
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17. (C) FonMin Gul stated there were disappointments and misunderstandings on both sides. Claiming he was disappointed in the result of the resolution, Gul opined that Turkey did not cooperate fully, but it did cooperate. Public opinion was strongly against the war. Secretary Powell,s

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visit was helpful. Turkey and the U.S. are "indispensable partners." This is not only the view of the government, the man on the street feels this way as well. The (March 1) resolution is not the only indicator of Turkish sentiment. There is no turning back on our pro-U.S., pro-E.U. policy. Except for that resolution, we (AK) have made progress on these fronts.

18. (C) As for relations with Turkey's eastern neighbors, Gul asserted that Turkey will influence them, not vice versa. Regarding Iran, Iraq and Syria, Gul claimed "they cannot give Turkey anything; Turkey can give them something. Turkey has had problems with them in the past and is only trying to improve relations.

19. (C) Gul concluded by promising to follow up with a visit of parliamentarians to the U.S. Congress and to assure significant AK party representation on Parliament's Turkish-American Friendship Committee. He noted the Israeli President is planning to visit Turkey soon and that Turkey supported the Middle East roadmap and will contribute to peace in the region.

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MFA - Ambassador Ugur Ziyal  
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110. (C) Ministry of Foreign Affairs Under Secretary Ambassador Ziyal commented that many in the GOT incorrectly assumed the problems had passed and noted the U.S.-Turkish military relationship must be repaired. On the future of Iraq, he stressed, the U.S. and Turkey need to consult and work closely. Observing the U.S. and Turkey have gone through worse crises before, and will weather this one, Ziyal confessed he is at a loss as to what Turkey can do right now.

He wondered about a trip to Washington but asked how such a delegation would be received.

11. (C) Ziyal dismissed concerns about the Turkmen, saying they are not warlike; they are doctors and tradesmen and will add to peace and stability. He thought it important to prevent Kurd-Arab clashes as well as to fight the PKK.

12. (C) Wexler advised a well-coordinated parliamentary trip with the right message would be helpful and suggested that a visit to Israel by the FM and/or PM would also help.

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Central Bank Governor Sureyya Serdengeçti  
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13. (C) Central Bank Governor Sureyya Serdengeçti told Congressman Wexler that the AK government had taken office ill-prepared to address Turkey's economic problems, and its learning curve had been longer than expected. After a brief post-election boost, confidence fell in December-February in the face of the government's lack of enthusiasm for reform and growing concerns about an Iraq operation.

14. (C) The key issue, according to Serdengeçti, is whether there will be sufficient political support to stick to the reform program, and an absence of political friction that could undermine confidence. While the Prime Minister and some others in the Party now have a better understanding of the need for the IMF program, others in AK do not. Moreover, there are other "power groups" in the country that oppose economic stabilization efforts because they want to see AK suffer and fall.

15. (C) Serdengeçti concluded by arguing that he and other technocrats had to convince the government (and the rest of the state) of the need to stick with the reform program and to continue to move closer to the West. On the economy, he told PM Erdogan a week ago that the government could not make any more mistakes.

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Parliamentary Meetings  
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16. (C) Wexler met with representatives of the Turkish Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee and the U.S.-Turkish Friendship Committee, whose leadership consists entirely of CHP parliamentarians who had voted against the March 1 resolution. Interlocutors included AKP MP and Foreign Affairs Committee chair Mehmet Dülger, CHP MP AND retired AMB Onur Oymen, and Foreign Affairs Committee staffer Osman Ulukan. Chairman Dülger thanked Wexler for his visit, saying, "Ours is a lasting friendship. Any misunderstandings should be lifted." Dülger advised shaping public opinion in Turkey and the U.S. in a positive way, noting "We do not want to give the impression to the Turkish people that Turkey-U.S. ties are weak. Ambassador Oymen followed, asserting that there is no anti-American feeling in CHP. Oymen applauded Wexler's suggestion that Parliament demonstrate a show of support, while cautioning that it is not difficult to persuade Turkey, but you cannot force Turkey to do anything."  
PEARSON